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A. Report Title: Transition to Jointness: An Analysis and Appraisal of Consolidating Service Acquisition Personnel into a Joint Acquisition Force

B. DATE Report Downloaded From the Internet: October 18,1999

**C. Report's Point of Contact: (Name, Organization, Address, Office Symbol, & Ph #): DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR FORCE JOURNAL OF LOGISTICS
501 WARD STREET
GUNTER ANNEX
MAXWELL AFB, AL 36114-3236**

D. Currently Applicable Classification Level: Unclassified

E. Distribution Statement A: Approved for Public Release

**F. The foregoing information was compiled and provided by:
DTIC-OCA Initials: __pm__ Preparation Date OCTOBER 18, 1999**

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Transition to Jointness: An Analysis and Appraisal of Consolidating Service Acquisition Personnel into a Joint Acquisition Force

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With the momentum established by both the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Defense Acquisition Work Force Improvement Act (DAWIA) of 1991, why has the defense acquisition work force across the Services not yet been reorganized into a consolidated, joint organization? Would such an organization serve stakeholders (soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, taxpayers, and work force members) better than the current system? Where has the concern surrounding these questions escaped? Some of the answers lie in the events that have transpired over the last 12 years.

Background and Significance

After the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and more so after implementation of the DAWIA of 1991, it seemed the *handwriting was on the wall* and the inevitable would happen: the defense acquisition work force would become a joint acquisition work force. This rumor seemed destined to become reality given intense media coverage of duplicative requirements between the Services and defense contract fraud stories. The idea of a joint acquisition force was and still is today an unpopular suggestion, especially among military members of the respective Services' acquisition corps.

Since enactment of DAWIA, the Services are producing more professional (formally educated and trained) defense acquisition employees. However, that has not solved the numerous issues for which the defense acquisition work force gets blamed. In parallel with progression toward *jointness* is the advancement of technology and increasing capabilities in the form of: (1) weapon system technology, precision, range, and lethality and (2) information technology.

Such leaps in technical capability, coupled with the inability to capitalize on efficiencies related to both interoperability and production, presents an ominous sign. The inability of the acquisition field to bring this all together in a succinct, integrated package suggests that a revolution in military affairs is being suspended because defense acquisition leaders lack the understanding of how best to package the acquisition process organizationally. The increasing trend toward *jointness* in the shaping of, responding to, and preparing for the US strategic environment and the possible damaging and pervasive issues suggesting perhaps a *broken* acquisition work force in supporting joint operations, therefore, merits closer examination.

Definition of a Joint Acquisition Force

Reference to a *joint* or *purple* acquisition force requires an explanation of how such a force would be organized and what functions would be performed. What did Senators Goldwater and Nichols—as well as Representative Mavroules, the architect of

DAWIA—have in mind? Typical of federal legislation in being deliberately vague, no language accompanies either act (or implementation guidance thereof) on what type of structure a joint acquisition organization should have.

One perspective is that all acquisition organizations and professionals are subordinate to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology (USD[A&T]) and hence already comprise a joint organization. In following the pattern of *jointness* provided by the Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF) model, the USD (A&T) would be considered the Defense Acquisition and Technology Commander in Chief (CINC).

On the other hand, the perspective at the other extreme is defense acquisition organizations today, regardless of the fact they are all (directly or indirectly) subordinate to the USD(A&T), are not combined nearly enough in joint structure and function. A major reason consistently used to support this perspective is the large number of systems fielded by the different Services having duplicity and/or poor to nonexistent program connectivity. This reason is the one most used to infer the need to better organize in order to solve many acquisition issues. So in reality, how would a joint acquisition force be organized?

A commonly accepted definition for *jointness* is "... the art of combining capabilities from the different military Services to create an effect that is greater than the sum of the parts. Not all military functions or capabilities need to be joint."¹ This definition supports a continuum of solutions, to answer the question. Solutions range from a consolidated joint acquisition organization under a CINC to a separated acquisition force spread across the Services to a combination of the two falling in between.

Setting the Precedent for Jointness in Defense Acquisition

Numerous legislative and administrative events are responsible for the trend toward *jointness* within not only defense acquisition but also defense operations in general. The National Security Act of 1947 established not only the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Secretary of Defense, with sole managerial responsibility over the Armed Forces and their operations, but also the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as an advisory body to the National Command Authority (NCA). The formation of the JCS marked the beginning of *jointness* in name only.

One of the next major steps toward *jointness* took place in the early 1960s under Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. He brought the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) to DoD from the Ford Motor Company. One of McNamara's goals in introducing it was to force the Services into

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greater unity by requiring them to coordinate their respective budgeting issues as they worked through the PPBS cycle.

In 1986, the Reagan administration injected greater managerial responsibility and accountability into defense acquisition by enacting many of the recommendations of the Packard Commission. Actions resulting from the recommendations were establishment of an acquisition chain of command for major weapon system procurements and the appointment of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition (USD[A]) as the lead managerial acquisition authority and acquisition executive within DoD. The USD(A) (which eventually became the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology) was also labeled as the Defense Acquisition Executive (DAE).

The greatest impact in the military movement toward jointness was the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act. The act was far-reaching within DoD. It established the positions of JCS Chairman and Vice Chairman. It placed responsibilities on the people filling those positions to consolidate Service positions and report them to the NCA through one unified voice. This was in stark contrast to the requirements established by the National Security Act. That act required the Service chiefs to provide their input on defense operations, independently not collectively, to the NCA. Goldwater-Nichols created the potential for unification and consolidation of functions. Within defense acquisition channels, the work force observed this change and realized its far-reaching potential for consolidation of defense acquisition organizations.

The next and even more focused step toward consolidation of the defense acquisition work force was the passage of the Defense Acquisition Work Force Improvement Act. Given recent enactment of Goldwater-Nichols, legislative interest in the defense acquisition work force, through the enactment of DAWIA, heightened tension in the work force. The new act called for uniformity in both the acquisition process (the Life-Cycle System Management Model or LCSMM) and in training, education, and experience certification requirements of the acquisition work force. The law allowed DoD to delegate responsibility for bringing acquisition personnel to certification by respective Service component acquisition executives. However, because DAWIA introduced uniformity in both process and human resources, jointness and consolidation seemed possible at any moment.

Since passage of DAWIA, numerous acquisition reform initiatives have been legislated through annual Defense Authorization Acts. Although some reorganization has occurred in parallel with acquisition reform, it has primarily occurred as a result of the continuing trend to *size* the force. Many acquisition organizations have taken manpower and personnel cuts. Acquisition reform, on the other hand, has been generally limited to procedural, vice people, changes. Such changes have been far-reaching and beneficial. In general, many former procurement procedures were tightly regulated. Today, acquisition reform has legislatively and incrementally relaxed the rules and their burdensome requirements.

The public policy trend toward jointness has accelerated during the last 12 years. This occurred in conjunction with the changes in the strategic environment that created heightened public awareness of seemingly unlimited military spending during the middle 1980s and subsequent shrinking fiscal resources from the end of the Cold War to the present. These are the factors setting the precedence for jointness across the defense acquisition work force.

The Current Acquisition Work Force and Process

The defense acquisition work force is common only through implementation of DAWIA legislation and the acquisitions cycle it enables: the Life-Cycle System Management Model. Each Service, given prerogative by DAWIA, has, in fact, taken advantage of the flexibility permitted in designing respective autonomous acquisition corps: the Army Acquisition Corps, Air Force Acquisition Corps, and Navy Acquisition Professional Community. While some minimal level of standardization exists, there are a number of subtle differences between the Service acquisition organizations.

Conversely, the LCSMM followed by each Service is the same. It is, however, tailored by all acquisition professionals to fit the acquisition strategy of each program whether the program is Service specific or joint. This common guideline for program management has only evolved with the publication of Department of Defense Directive 5000 series documents and subsequent acquisition reform initiatives. Prior to that milestone, each Service generally followed its own set of rules with the exception of more strict functions such as contracting.

With the release of recent and continuing acquisition reform initiatives, the only consistency across the Services with regard to the LCSMM is change. The process has become more joint through a number of mechanisms introduced by acquisition reform and subsequently initiated and practiced within each of the Services. Types of commonality prevalent in emerging acquisition programs take the form of integrated product/process teams, outsourcing, and fulfillment of legal obligations. In following the change introduced by recent acquisition reform initiatives and the precedent for jointness as discussed, this is no surprise. Aside from a proportionate share of downsizing, the work force that enables the functioning of this process has been largely unaffected. Each Service acquisition corps still has distinct differences.

Comparison of Joint Organizational Options

Defense acquisition organizations are evolving into joint organizations. Some examples are the Defense Contract Audit Agency, Defense Logistics Agency, and Defense Contract Management Command.² Precedent-setting legislation, changes in the strategic landscape driving subsequent changes in materiel requirements, force drawdown, and austere military budgets, as well as technological advancements and lessons learned from private industry regarding best practices, are all variables contributing to the evolution. How remaining Service acquisition personnel would be organized into a joint acquisition force and how soon reorganization would occur are issues that must be researched thoroughly before comprehensive consolidation occurs. There are a multitude of ways to organize, but which way provides for the greatest effectiveness to stakeholders?

There is a continuum of ideas with a force patterned after the current UNAAF structure at one extreme to a force spread across the Services as they currently are at the other extreme. Somewhere in the middle is an evolving joint structure. Outside the bounds of the continuum is yet another option that would serve the purpose of integrating Service programs but would not actually be joint.

UNAAF Structure

A joint force that parallels the current organizational structure of a functional CINC (the UNAAF model) would fit a recognized pattern. Assuming an appointed civilian can serve as the combatant commander of such a force, then the rationale for forming a joint command seems legitimate. After all, the USD(A&T) is responsible for all defense acquisition personnel and processes. The question, however, of a civilian, other than the President, assuming command responsibility over both civilian and military members merits further study.

Joint Pub 0-2 establishes the following criteria for a unified command:³

1. A broad continuing mission exists, requiring execution by significant forces of two or more military departments and necessitating a single strategic direction.
2. Any combination of the following exists and significant forces of two or more military departments are involved:
 - A large-scale operation requiring positive control of tactical execution by a large and complex force.
 - A large geographic or functional area requiring single responsibility for effective coordination of the operations therein.
 - Necessity for common utilization of limited logistics means.

Sufficient rationale exists to argue that both criteria are not completely satisfied for establishing a joint unified command. With respect to the first criterion, identification of a *single strategic direction* could be easily established given the national focus on the use of the Armed Forces as well as spending of taxpayer dollars. Such a direction could provide timely, efficient, customer-focused, and the most technologically advanced materiel capabilities and services to each of the military Services equitably through effective, integrated, and responsive acquisition processes that provide interoperability to the fullest extent possible.

With respect to the second criterion, the USD(A&T), through a unified command structure, could assume *positive control* of the execution of *large-scale [acquisition] operations*. The USD(A&T) actually does this now as the DAE and as a milestone decision authority on large Acquisition Category I defense programs. The acquisition process is a *large functional area* for which the USD(A&T) is totally responsible. With a keen perspective on defense acquisition spending, that person can provide for a *common utilization of limited logistics means* in the form of acquisition programming dollars, manpower, and time.

Conversely, a major disqualifier of the USD(A&T) as a CINC of a functional command is the fact the majority of acquisition professionals are civilians and, therefore, not considered *forces* of the military departments. Functional CINCs, although generally tasked in a supporting role to regional CINCs, are still responsible to lead in a warfighting role if necessary. With the exception of Emergency-Essential Civilians (EEC), civilians cannot be ordered to serve in warfighting capacities.

A unified command is created to perform an active role in warfighting. The acquisition role is less direct. It is organized within the Services and fits within the Service roles in unified commands: maintenance and support to CINCs and their commands. All military entities that are not unified commands exist to support unified commands. This is where acquisition organizations have traditionally and inherently belonged. Because of this role, unlike the CINCs, acquisition organizations are inextricably linked to the PPBS process. Without major change in the PPBS—because PPBS is a 2-year, calendar-driven process that CINCs do not control—it is questionable if the USD(A&T) could attain enough influence over PPBS to perform responsibly as a CINC.

Acquisition Personnel within the Services

At the other extreme of the continuum of organizational structures is an acquisition force spread across the Services. This is where the current structure came from. Prior to DAWIA and Goldwater-Nichols, an untrained, uneducated work force existed in each of the Services. There was no common standard, but each Service had the flexibility to interact with the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System and acquire weapon systems through their own Service-unique procedures. To attain this organization would require more than 20 years regression. Aside from cases of defense fraud and overspending that continue, sporadically, this type of organization, although very inefficient, worked well during years of unconstrained defense budgets. The legislation and procedures implemented since such times, although associated with drawdown and austere budgets, brought about innovative approaches to working together, overcoming duplicity, and increasing interoperability.

The Evolving Joint Acquisition Force

Somewhere along the continuum between both extremes is a third option patterned after the evolving total force joint structure. It is the current acquisition force with the numerous joint applications and tailored approaches employed in efforts to streamline, reduce acquisition cycle time, and provide real reform. Organizations are a mixture of military, civilian, government, and contractor personnel structured within each Service and within joint organizations at the JCS, DoD, and Joint Program Office levels. Acquisition functions, such as budgeting and testing with the greatest commonality, across the Services are beginning to consolidate. Many functions will be outsourced, but a certain degree of military independence will be maintained to provide inherent flexibility when required.

An Organization Serving in a Joint Role

An all-civilian work force could be employed by adopting the Acquisition Work Force Personnel Demonstration concept that provides incentives and compensation for the civilian portion of the acquisition work force. Although no operational experience would be provided because there would be no military members, interface would be available through a career-broadening assignment program (where military operators are assigned to an acquisition organization and then returned to the field).

Continuity would be strong with an all-civilian work force. Conversely, mobility would be required on a selective basis to provide for professional development of future acquisition leaders. Functions not inherently governmental would be outsourced. Transition to such an organization—removing the military component—sets a precedent that would be difficult to reverse. Investments made in education and training for military personnel thus far would not be fully realized. Inherent military functions, such as contingency contracting and test piloting, would be removed from the acquisition organization's responsibilities and retained in the military. Specially trained Emergency-Essential Civilians would provide those functions deemed inherently governmental.⁴ In the meantime, the military would need to integrate such positions from the respective acquisition corps back into the operational force.

An all-civilian organization could provide increased efficiency and enhanced interoperability. Simultaneously, however, without traditional interservice rivalry and creative competition, a lack of innovative approaches and technologies could be expected, at least initially. A greater proportion of contracted support could counter such issues. After all, the acquisition corps within each of the Services is primarily composed of civilian personnel.⁵ Accompanying contract support, however, is the concern for loss

of control and hence greater risk to the government and ultimately all stakeholders involved.

In addition to the historical precedent set for a joint acquisition force, conditions are set for transition in any number of directions. Many joint processes embedded in acquisition procedures, as well as those recently introduced through acquisition reform efforts, are already inherent in joint staffs. In many ways, the acquisition community may have already surpassed many joint staffs by imposing more joint procedures on its own organizations than the quantity and quality of those used by joint staffs. On the other hand, many of the joint procedures recently imposed for utilization across the defense acquisition community actually compensate for a force that is too large, cumbersome, geographically separated, and inefficient to be compatible with a centrally located joint staff and associated subordinate organizations.

A regressive acquisition force is extreme and costly, although satisfactory to each of the Services. On the other hand, an all-civilian acquisition force would reflect the true direction of the trend toward efficiency, continuous and growing expertise, and interoperability. There are inherent risks with every organizational option. What would be the most effective? Given the current strategic environment and defense spending constraints, there is no question that the unity of effort, centralized planning, and decentralized control characteristic of joint organizations would provide the emphasis necessary and the resulting benefits required by stakeholders.

An Analysis of a Consolidated, Joint Acquisition Force

The merits of a joint acquisition force (regardless of organizational design) are enhanced efficiency, reduced cost, and complete interoperability as a minimum. But such benefits would not be attainable immediately. An initial *break-in* period would be required after reorganization to fine-tune procedural details attached to organizational changes that are not apparent on the surface.

Conversely, there are disadvantages associated with a joint acquisition organization. At least initially, if not over the long term, they would include a clash of Service cultures, an increase in Service parochialism, and some stagnation or lack of innovation and creativity from a lack of competitive pressure between Services. Many in the acquisition work force would feel that a consolidated organization was being forced on them unnecessarily, causing their distrust of decision makers saddled with the responsibility of implementing the changes. Disadvantages may be observable immediately in comparison to beneficial changes that could eventually be realized by the change process. These types of initial, possibly evolving to long-term, responses are not complementary to such changes. Further, if such a jump is made, it could not be easily reversed and reexpanded if another international environment evolved requiring defense buildup akin to that of the Cold War.

Effectiveness of Joint Acquisition Organizations

The advantages of consolidating acquisition organizations into a joint acquisition force are many: greater efficiency, less cost, and greater interoperability, to name just a few. A common acquisition process (in the form of the LCSMM) is already in place and functioning. A work force with generally common standards is in place and functioning as well.

Senator Nunn noted in the fall of 1996 that force levels had been cut by 25 percent and manpower by 31 percent since the end of the Cold War but the defense bureaucracy had not been cut proportionately (only 15 percent since 1987).⁶ A big portion not cut is defense acquisition organizations at DoD and Service component levels. Senator Nunn's message was that DoD's reaction and

subsequent adaptability to new missions has been too slow. The large organization is duplicative, sluggish, and draining the system of its energy.⁷

In following Senator Nunn's suggestion and by using an effective and functioning framework, it is possible for a joint acquisition force to follow any of the options except the regression option. With regard to the unified command structure, command channels are already present: the USD(A&T) would be equivalent to a functional CINC, but responsibilities as a CINC would require modification as the USD(A&T) does not plan for and conduct warfighting operations. With regard to the evolving joint acquisition force, numerous changes would be required but then could be done incrementally as the process has occurred thus far. With regard to the all-civilian force, continuity, consolidation, and streamlining could be gained at the expense of continuous operational expertise.

Consolidation of common functions—such as budgeting, contracting, testing, and military disposal activities, among others—could provide tremendous cost savings as all of these functions follow procedures that are broad and not Service-specific. This activity could apply in varying degrees to any of the alternatives discussed with the exception of the regression option. The calculated savings of such consolidations are unknown but are worth investigating in future studies as the work force incrementally moves toward jointness.

If centralization of such common activities proves effective, outsourcing is another question to be investigated and applied to each of the alternatives. If the functions are inherently governmental and cannot, for reasons of national security, be contracted out, then this becomes a moot point. Conversely, outsourcing a function to a contractor is generally 10 to 20 percent less costly than if performed by government employees.

Ineffectiveness of Joint Acquisition Organizations

Many could easily claim the effectiveness of joint acquisition organizations is more than countered by the ineffectiveness of them. As previously mentioned, with the onslaught of acquisition reform initiatives, numerous processes clearly associated with jointness have already been implemented. With such change came minor and temporary organizational arrangements that exist for the purpose of completing a process or producing a product. Permanent reorganization at this point in time would drive additional change and frustration to the personnel running the acquisition process. The potential for numerous issues affecting human resources and their subsequent performance of the acquisition mission dictates that such a change at this point in time is unnecessary.

During this time of fiscal austerity, it would be imprudent to further consolidate what has traditionally been treated as inherently Service-unique functions. The intent of Congressman Mavroules when drafting DAWIA was not to centralize or isolate the acquisition field. He believed doing so during declining budgets would cause players to be less rational, the exact opposite of his objective with regard to the new legislation.⁸ It is also interesting to note that the Packard Commission considered formation of an all-civilian acquisition work force as a means of streamlining defense acquisition. The commission chose not to recommend such an organizational structure because the operational expertise brought to the process by military acquisition work force members was too important and vital to the acquisition function.⁹

Measuring the effectiveness of a consolidated acquisition force at the present time is difficult. Even though there is some commonality between the respective Service acquisition corps, there are many outstanding issues that would need to be resolved in order to create such an organization. For example, each Service has a different quantity of people in its respective acquisition community, and each

has different requirements for its military and civilian members. There would be questions that would require answers from DoD, such as: Should membership by Service be proportional to military acquisition spending or to force end strength? Do the sizes of the acquisition corps require adjustment? In addition, civilian mobility requirements vary across the Services as do time in service and operational experience requirements for military members. These differences would require reconciliation before consolidation. Addressing such issues has potential for initial conflict between the Services before they reorganize and initial consternation and distrust among the members of the newly formed unified organization.

Many career fields are utilized across the phases of the LCSMM. Many of them are not Service-specific and could be consolidated. Consolidating some and not all functions could serve to disrupt the progress currently being made by consolidating some of the same functions in integrated product/process teams and within joint program management offices. Additionally, it is difficult to prove whether the physical removal of personnel performing such functions and consolidating them into a joint organization would still provide the same level of effectiveness recently introduced by such *process multipliers*. Forcing one change right after another seems counterintuitive and could disrupt the very processes that were recently changed—and rightly so—for the purpose of enhancing efficiency. Over time, such a change could be positive but, from a current perspective, would sacrifice recently attained progress for a new organization that is experimental at best.

There are numerous advantages and disadvantages to both: consolidating acquisition personnel into a joint acquisition force and consideration of how such a joint force would be organized. For the present time, however, the evolving joint acquisition force is currently packaged as the best solution for all stakeholders. It provides for adequate, incremental, nonradical, but necessary change. In the long term, one of the other organizations, such as an all-civilian work force, could replace it.

Transition to a joint force now, although possible, would be ineffective. There has been so much incremental change introduced into defense acquisition over past decades that one more, albeit major, would seem to follow the trend. Conversely, the magnitude of the consequences of such a major undertaking could produce an effect opposite to the one intended. There is no doubt that some, at least initial, Service rivalry and discrepancies over priorities and contributions would result. In addition, however, introducing such a drastic change could result in the demise of the professional acquisition work force as it exists today by driving away the work force that DAWIA legislation authorized millions of dollars to educate and train.

Some day, the work force will be joint. Many say it already is, and many think much more can be done to make it more joint in nature. There are underlying questions at each incremental step toward jointness regarding how much consolidation is adequate, and conversely, how much is detrimental. Defense leaders are struggling with these issues as the joint acquisition force evolves. Numerous topics for further study arise from this subject. They include how best to organize a joint force (not necessarily in following the current framework); whether the effectiveness of transitioning to a joint force counters the immediate and consequential ineffectiveness of doing so and, if not, where the break-even point occurs in time; and finally, what incentives are necessary to attract and retain the best possible defense acquisition work force, organized jointly or not.

An Appraisal of Consolidation Advantages and Disadvantages

The defense acquisition work force across the Services has not been reorganized into a consolidated, joint organization because such an organization is not currently necessary. In light of recent procedural changes introduced as acquisition reform legislation, transitioning to such an organization would not serve stakeholders better than the current system. The current system is continuously evolving, adapting to more efficient methods while addressing joint requirements as they arise. It is flexible in that it provides for both joint and Service-specific programs. Interoperability does need improvement. Driving toward a joint acquisition force is overkill in addressing such an issue. The traditional concerns regarding consolidation that arose approximately 12 years ago have escaped, transformed, and reemerged in the form of acquisition reform initiatives.

Such initiatives will continue to be introduced as their effectiveness is tested in smaller acquisition organizations and then shared with the rest of the acquisition community. The problem will continue, however, for leaders to decide what is appropriate for all as opposed to just some. Many issues in acquisition are so situation-specific that they cannot be applied universally. When future acquisition reform initiatives lead to consolidation, steps will evolve incrementally so that Service parochialism is not a debilitating byproduct. To make such a jump now could result in overdominance by one Service, the stripping of the roles of the remaining Services, and an overall ineffective joint force when it is needed the most.

Consolidation to a joint force will happen eventually. The force already fits a structure similar to that of a functional unified command. The *softening* of regulations from acquisition reform initiatives has provided the same flexibility and ability to tailor programs and processes on an ad hoc basis, for the period of time necessary, as joint regulations allow the joint force commander. The question that remains but that is too difficult to predict is what the joint force will ultimately look like.

Consolidation cannot come quickly; it must be incremental to be effective. There are too many interim steps to be completed. Centralized management systems for acquisition programs and for the acquisition work force itself—both military and civilian—must be created. Decisions must be made regarding whether civilians provide continuity within a given specialty and hence should grow within an organization or whether they must provide a broad understanding as they move between assignments much like military members currently do.

The key to providing the best for all stakeholders involved, whether organized as a joint force or not, is flexibility. There is no fear that a formally organized joint acquisition force will be implemented immediately because a trend is set for an incremental approach, an approach often followed in public policy making. To drastically change the organization over a constrained period of time would be too radical and could put national defense at risk.

Recommendations

Given the current posture of the US post-Cold War national defense and the evolving strategic landscape, in order to maintain a cutting-edge robust force, the process of stewarding the trend toward a joint acquisition process and force must include a number of interim steps. First and most important, maintain flexibility. Although flexibility is inherently inefficient, it is the key ingredient of jointness. Acquisition reform has removed the rigidity formerly inherent in defense acquisition and has placed it on the path toward progress. Continued maintenance of recently injected flexibility measures, along

with continued introduction of a steady stream of initiatives to sustain it, will enable transition to a joint force when the time is right.

Across the Service acquisition corps, there are several critical areas that require standardizing. First, for civilians, the intent of signing a mobility statement must be revisited. Civilians have traditionally brought continuity to defense organizations. With regard to acquisition organizations, this is especially important given the timeframes necessary to complete acquisition of many weapon systems or even to progress between milestone decisions. If military members continue to be reassigned in accordance with normal rotations (except for those under program management charter to remain for longer periods of time), the need for consistency remains. Civilians provide that level of stability necessary for weapon system procurement. Mobility should be permitted but not required. It should be permitted, however, within a program hierarchy so as not to lose continuity. Movement can be permitted outside a program hierarchy once transition to a replacement, with adequate institutional knowledge regarding the program's history, is in place.

For military members, some Services like the Army and Navy require a minimum number of years of operational experience prior to entering the acquisition field. Conversely, the Air Force does not. The Air Force does, however, provide opportunities for career-broadening experiences that provide for acquisition personnel to be exposed to operational assignments. This is an outstanding opportunity that serves to refocus the acquisition specialist on the key system and performance parameters in which the operators are interested. The Services collectively need to merge these requirements. All Services should require a standard level of operational experience prior to entering the acquisition field, and all Services should provide opportunity for career-broadening assignments. After all, military members bring operational experience to the acquisition field. Military members without such experience fulfill the same role as civilians. To maintain balance and strong ties to the stakeholders and their needs, the work force requires both military and civilian membership.

Operational experience prior to entry and career-broadening opportunities will provide the operational expertise that is so crucial to the military presence in the acquisition field. Services should not permit return to operational duty on a permanent basis after accession into the acquisition community. Such allowances directly contradict the very formation and investment in a professional acquisition work force (as enacted under DAWIA).

Ultimately, the work force should maintain a mix of military (to include enlisted support) and civilian members proportionate with defense acquisition budgets consistent across the Services. Both bring unique characteristics to the table. A proportionate mix between the two in each of the Services will make transition to a joint force easier when the time comes. Additionally, balance and proportion provide for *taming* what has the potential to become an unconstrained professional bureaucracy by providing purpose and direction.

To counter the possible effects of the requirement to contain the professional bureaucracy, powerful incentives to draw the best in, as well as retain, them must be established. For example, funding streams must continue to provide opportunities to attend training with industry, graduate school, and operational assignments in order to draw and retain both military and civilian members. Generally, the Services have good records in this area. Conversely, to maintain segments of the work force long term and to get the most out of the investment in education, training, and experience, other incentives must be offered to retain acquisition community members. Acquisition reform initiatives have provided for the mirroring of numerous commercial activities to streamline and cut costs in acquisition processes but have not introduced like measures providing incentives for personnel retention.

Often corporate firms offer individuals financial incentives, such as stock options or raises, to ensure their expertise is retained. While the military cannot afford or permit additional expenses or favoritism, it could offer other less-protrusive incentives to attain a favorable return on the training and experience investment of acquisition work force members. For example, it could require military officers to serve a mandatory Service obligation (possibly prolonging careers) regardless of rank achieved but simultaneously provide proportionate financial rewards for doing so. With civilians, a similar scale (separate from current civil Service system rewards) could be implemented for selected acquisition personnel. The ultimate objective is to draw and retain quality people who can mentor younger members while at the same time serve in positions of responsibility nested in a process that has an inherently longer cycle time than most other military processes. This provides more *bang for the buck* and stability with regard to personnel.

Finally, centralized program and personnel management systems with interface between military and civilian categories, as well as between the Services, is crucial, not just for joint opportunities but for a common basis of understanding and communication. In 1991, DAWIA mandated that such systems be implemented, but to date, the interface has not occurred. There are systems within the Services, but they are independent, with different data elements and variables, thus requiring restructuring in order to interface on any level. This failure to interface is the most difficult to accept given the pace of technology and the accompanying pace of reform. This is a requirement that must absolutely be met soon, not just for the purposes of transitioning to a joint acquisition force.

Conclusion

The handwriting has been on the wall for formation of a joint acquisition work force since the passage of Goldwater-Nichols. The concept was strengthened in 1991 with the implementation of DAWIA directing the establishment of a professional acquisition work force with common standards across DoD. After that, the handwriting was erased, and other measures in the form of acquisition reform initiatives were substituted. Acquisition reform continues to evolve today. The concept of jointness has taken the form of process over content in that the LCSMM has been modified, tailored, and adapted with respect to relaxation of regulations and implementation of innovative ideas as opposed to strict consolidation of acquisition functions in a joint acquisition organization.

Regardless of the numerous acquisition reform initiatives being continuously introduced, the progressive trend toward jointness has not ceased. It is not in the best interests of stakeholders to implement a consolidated, joint force now, but it is in the best interests that the end result be such an organization should the current trend toward jointness, in not only defense in general but also acquisition in particular, continue. Incremental change into a joint acquisition force is a natural progression. Defense acquisition is already joint to some extent, but further change, especially in the area of the people, the assets of the entire process, is too radical and would be detrimental to the nation at this point in time.

In the long term, the possibility for consolidation is extremely high. In order to prepare for it, several changes must be incrementally made to support the current trend. First and foremost, the process and the work force supporting it must maintain flexibility. The key to jointness, as well as addressing Service-unique requirements, is flexibility.

Also, a proportionate civilian and military mix across the Services

is essential to maintaining program continuity and operational flavor. Inconsistencies with regard to civilian requirements for mobility, as well as military requirements for operational experience and career-broadening opportunities, must be standardized across the Services. Ultimately, the right mix will provide for direction, purpose, and avoidance of a professional bureaucracy.

The government must provide adequate incentives to both draw and retain the best military and civilian members possible. Centralized management systems for both programs and personnel are long overdue. Interfaces between systems within each of the Services must be implemented and exercised immediately to provide for a common understanding and communication.

The idea of a joint acquisition force is far from dead, but acquisition reform seems to have substituted, to some degree, in the meantime. How long will this substitute last? When will a joint acquisition force become an acquisition reform initiative? Only time will tell. We must prepare now for the future.

Notes

1. Lecture, Brigadier General James W. Morehouse to Air Command and Staff College, "Joint Warfare, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, 21 January 1999.
2. Suggestion provided by Faculty Research Advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Burney.

3. Joint Pub (JP) 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, 24 February 1995, IV-5.
4. Suggestion provided by Faculty Research Advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Burney.
5. AAC is comprised of 91 percent civilian personnel ("Army Acquisition Work Force, *Personnel*." [Online] Available: <http://dacm.sarda.army.mil/workforce/factbook/aawp.html>. [30 October 1998]); AFAC is comprised of 63 percent civilians (from DAWIA STATS [Online]. Available: http://www.safaq.hq.af.mil/acq_workf.dawia/1.xls. [30 October 1998]); and NAPC is comprised of 93 percent civilians (E-mail, Captain Steve Kreutner, USN, Acquisition Professional Advisor, Bureau of Naval Personnel, 23 October 1998.)
6. Sam Nunn, "Future Trends in Defense Organization." *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, 64, [Online]. Available: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/archive.htm [17 October 1998].
7. *Ibid*.
8. N. Mavroules, "Creating a Professional Acquisition Work Force," *National Contract Management Journal*, Vol. 24, 2, 22.
9. David E. Lockwood, *The Packard Commission Report and Defense Acquisition Organization*, Library of Congress Report No. 86-717F. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 1986.

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